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# THE ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

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## A Fearful Responsibility.

The contents of this issue of the *ADVOCATE* was mostly in type before the outbreak of hostilities between this country and Spain. We had believed up to the last moment that hostilities would be avoided, although we were well aware that the course events were taking was running straight and swiftly to war. It did not seem to us possible that, so near the end of the nineteenth century, after the leading part which our people and government have taken in the movement for the abolition of war between nations, our nation would suddenly take upon itself the fearful responsibility of inaugurating a war, with all the devastation, passion, corruption and degeneration involved in it. It seemed reasonable to believe that the United States would never have another war, but would hold and strengthen its proud position as the leader of the nations towards a civilization relying for its strength on right and goodwill, and not on the soulless methods of brute force. We make no effort, therefore, to conceal our in-

tense disappointment and deep sense of humiliation at what seems to us an irretrievable mistake on the part of those to whose lot it fell to control the nation's destinies at this supreme hour.

We do not see any ground for changing the position heretofore taken in these columns. We do not mean to misrepresent anybody's motives. We certainly would not make the task of the Administration any more difficult and thankless than it will naturally be. We yield to nobody in sympathy for the suffering Cubans, nor in abhorrence of the past oppressions and the recent inhumanities practised by the Spanish colonial officials. A nation that makes bull-fights its universal pastime can not have our respect. We have said from the beginning that Cuba ought to be free, if her people desire independence; that though as yet little fitted for self-government the people of the island would never learn to govern themselves except by actually practicing self-government. But no end, however noble and desirable, justifies the use, for its attainment, of a means which is essentially inhuman and iniquitous.

We have not believed that our government would be justified, even from its own point of view as to war, in stepping off its own territory and attempting by violence, multiplied disastrous results of which are sure to follow, to right the wrongs of these neighbors about whose real character and responsibility for their own sufferings there is so much uncertainty. To do so has seemed to us the inevitable sacrifice of a large and general future good, for our own country and for the whole world, to a local and temporary good, if it should prove to be a good.

The course on which Congress has forced the too pliant Administration to enter seems to us still in the highest degree culpable, because another way was open of attaining the same end, a way on which the Administration was far along toward success.

Of the several reasons urged for going to war, there is only one that has even a show of respectability. The claim, said to have been deliberately put forth by a learned judge of Boston, now in the South, that we need a war every generation to educate the people, is unworthy of any man calling himself an American. The disturbance to our commercial and other home interests caused by the prolonged struggle in Cuba, urged by many as the real ground for armed intervention, furnishes but a paltry pretext for occasioning the wholesale disturbance, material and moral, present and future, following in the wake of war. "Vengeance for the *Maine*," which in the last hours, both in Congress and among the people, was more and more put forward as the ground for war, is a motive worthy only of a barbarous people,—doubly so after Spain had proposed the only method of reaching a rational conclusion as to the facts and the responsibility in the case.

There remains the one motive of humanity. With this generous sentiment of the Administration, of some members of Congress, and of a large portion of the people, we have the deepest sympathy. But the disposition, shown by many, to fly in wrath to the monstrous inhumanities of war to stop the inhumanities calling forth these feelings of sympathy for the suffering, we confess it hard to understand, when exhibited by people professing to be Christian and civilized. To say in justification, that there is no way of remedying a wrong except by committing another wrong, such as war in its very nature always is, is the purest begging of the question. That is saying that good is a weak and imperfect instrument, and must have evil to assist it. In the case before us there was another very evident way, and there would be in all cases, so far as wrong can ever be immediately righted, if there were a tithe of the readiness to find it and to suffer in carrying it out that there is to rush vindictively upon the wrongdoers and crush them to death. We do not deny that good, apparently, comes out of evil, but this is because the good God does not forsake the world, but does his own good work in the midst of the clash and destructiveness of evil purposes and evil means.

Notwithstanding our position on this matter, we can sincerely wish and pray that the conflict now on may be short, and may be productive of as little evil and overruled for as much good as possible. We

hope it may result in the freedom of Cuba and in stable and orderly government on that long oppressed and misgoverned island. We hope that it may open the eyes of Spain to the unrighteousness of her colonial methods and incite her to an internal renovation of spirit such as will render her henceforth incapable of such deeds as she has done in the past. Unless she repents soon, her day of grace will soon be over.

We cannot see, under the circumstances, how the war is to result in any good to this nation. Certain evils are sure to come to us from it. We shall incur the deeper dislike and distrust of other nations. We shall incur the deep-seated and enduring hatred of the Spanish people. We shall as a people dislike Spain more after having forced her out of Cuba than before. This animosity will weaken and retard our life for a hundred years to come. We shall be much farther along when the war closes towards the adoption of a policy of militarism with all the burdens and slavery imposed by it. We shall be more disposed to meddle in the affairs of other peoples. A policy of territorial extension, with its dangers and expensiveness, will be the almost inevitable result of the war. All our declarations about not wishing to annex Cuba will then scarcely be worth the paper on which they are written. Entanglements with other nations will follow. Our own people will feel more self-sufficient, more haughty and more warlike. Some of these evils may be avoided if the war is short. We shall sincerely hope that they may all be minimized as much as possible, for the sake of the character and honor of the nation which with all true Americans we love too deeply to wish to see its name in any measure sullied.

The war will necessarily check for a time the peace movement. But it will not permanently interfere with it. This movement is now too deep, too widespread and of too great momentum to be more than temporarily interfered with. It will move on powerfully and majestically over the world. We shall expect it to break forth somewhere in a new tidal wave after the war closes, just as it has done after each of the war periods of the century. What we fear is that its center of gravity, which has, ever since the movement began a century ago, always been in our country, may move from us never more to return. When a nation once forfeits a high prerogative which God has given it, it rarely if ever regains it.